



"Enriching Lives"

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL EXAMINER-CORONER
1104 N. MISSION RD, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90033



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Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner

March 3, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
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From: Mark A. Fajardo, M.D.
Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner

Elaine Palaiologos
Chief Deputy Director

REPORT BACK ON DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL EXAMINER-CORONER ANTELOPE VALLEY REGIONAL OFFICE

This is in response to the February 2, 2016, Board of Supervisors motion directing the Medical-Examiner Coroner (DMEC) to "work with the Chief Executive Office and report back to the Board in 30 days with a review of the resources available at the Coroner's Antelope Valley Regional Office (AVRO) and recommendations on ways to improve operations and reduce response times." An amendment was added to the motion for a countywide assessment to determine the feasibility of opening satellite offices in remote areas of the County, such as Pomona.

Background Information

The AVRO, located at 44900 60th Street West in Lancaster, was established in the late 1980's to facilitate the expedient and efficient handling of cases arising in the Antelope Valley. Over the past four years, the total workload at the AVRO has increased from a low of 420 to a high of 530. This includes field calls, mortuary sign out cases, and hospital calls.

Available Resources

Two Coroner Investigators are assigned to AVRO and have take-home vehicles with lights and sirens. One investigator has a sedan, and the other has a large 4x4 utility truck. The AVRO facility consists of a small pre-fab building formerly used by Health Services Administration and a crypt that can store up to -six decedents (two of the compartments are inoperable, so currently there is only a capacity for four), located in a wing of the former High Desert Medical Center.

Accreditations:

*National Association of Medical Examiners
California Medical Association-Continuing Medical Education
Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education*

*American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/LAB-International
Peace Officer Standards and Training Certified*

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DMEC responds to field calls only upon notification by law enforcement personnel and typically takes an investigator between 30 minutes to 1 hour to respond in the North County areas. However, rough terrain or inclement weather may delay the overall process of accessing a decedent.

Recommendations to Improve Operations

The DMEC will continue to use all available resources, including the deployment of investigator and transport staff, the use of take-home vehicles, and communications with other public safety agencies to improve service in the Antelope Valley and throughout the County.

In a recent case, law enforcement delayed notifying DMEC about a death involving a Metrolink train, which resulted in an unusually lengthy response time from the DMEC. Following this incident, meetings were held between the DMEC, LASD, Metrolink, and County Fire Emergency Medical Services to ensure that DMEC is notified promptly when needed.

The AVRO crypt has two inoperable compartments, lacks the ability to store decomposed or overweight decedents, and requires frequent repair. DMEC is working with CEO Asset Management on developing a long-term solution.

Lastly, as proposed in the amended motion, DMEC will work with CEO to conduct a countywide assessment and determine the feasibility of opening satellite offices in other areas of the County. In addition to the two investigators located at the Antelope Valley Regional Office, DMEC has two investigators located in offices provided by the San Fernando Police Department. Additionally, the DMEC recently acquired office space for up to four investigators at a County building located at 24320-40 S. Narbonne Avenue in Lomita. The Lomita location should be ready to occupy within two to three months. Remote work locations facilitate DMEC response times for the North County, San Fernando Valley, and South Bay areas.

If you have any questions or need additional information, you may contact Elaine Palaiologos at (323) 343-0778, or via e-mail at epalaiologos@coroner.lacounty.gov.

MAF:EP

C: BOS Executive Office
Chief Executive Office
County Counsel